



MINNESOTA
**Brain Injury
Alliance**

**MIND
MATTERS**

SPRING/SUMMER
2026



THAT GUT FEELING

**Brain Injury
& Gut Health**



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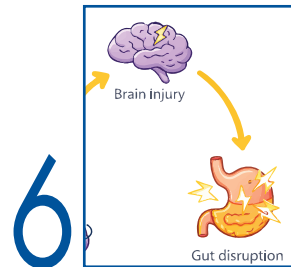
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MINNESOTA
**Brain Injury
Alliance**

MISSION

The mission of the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance is to raise awareness and enhance the quality of life for all people affected by brain injury.



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Thank you for your continued support of the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance.





Dear *Mind Matters* readers,

2026 is a milestone year for the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance as it marks the ten-year anniversary of Unmasking Brain Injury in Minnesota! Unmasking began as an art project and has grown into a statewide storytelling movement. Since 2016, more than 2,000 Minnesotans living with brain injury have created masks that reflect their experiences, hopes, fears, and resilience. That's over 2,000 unique stories that, together, send a powerful message that every voice matters and that we walk this journey together.

This year, organizations across Minnesota will display masks leading up to our anniversary celebration in March. I hope you'll join us in recognizing this phenomenal achievement. Follow for updates at UnmaskingMN.org.

I'd also like to take a moment to talk about the upcoming changes to Medicaid (Medical Assistance or MA) eligibility. We understand that these shifts are raising concerns. The MA system is complex even on a good day. Changes like these can leave anyone feeling uncertain.

Beginning in 2027, more than 225,000 adults in Minnesota may see updates to how their eligibility is reviewed or renewed. Retroactive coverage periods will shorten. And while the new work requirements do not apply to individuals on MA due to disability, some people in the expansion group may still feel the impact.

Here's the good news: your story can help shape what happens next. When you share how these changes affect you with your neighbors, your community, or your elected officials, you help build understanding. This is your lived experience and that perspective matters.

The important thing to remember is you don't have to do it alone. Our Resource Facilitation team is always here to help you understand your options, find clear answers, and celebrate your victories. As updates come, we'll be with you tracking changes,

sharing information, and helping find the options that best serve you.

Finally, I need to acknowledge that Minnesota is moving through a time of change and uncertainty. We all feel it. But brain injury can make that extra layer of instability feel even heavier.

So let me offer you this personal reassurance: the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance is here for you and every Minnesotan without exception.

No matter your background.

No matter your politics.

No matter your immigration status, race, beliefs, or identity.

Brain injury does not discriminate, and neither do we. Our goal is simple: to be a reliable place of support for anyone who needs us.

I truly believe in the strength of this community, in neighbors helping neighbors, and in the ability of Minnesotans to lift each other up! And, we do it all in sunshine, in snow, and in more snow. Usually, more snow.

So, thank you for reading, and thank you for the trust you give us. I'm grateful to be spending 2026 with all of you.

Bradley Donaldson
Chief Executive Officer
Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance

Being a Better Person Post-TBI

By Mike Strand

At these best moments a great humility fused with a great ambition: to be only what I was, but to the utmost of what I was.

– Stephen Spender, *World Within World*

Stephen Spender has put into words what it takes to succeed with peace and confidence while living with brain injury. I found it all too easy to bring myself down with unrealistic expectations. Trying to be the person I was before my brain injury was the chief unrealistic expectation that I had.

Things didn't change for me until I adopted a better attitude. It wasn't until I let go of trying to be who I was that I began trying to be who I could be.

One of the first steps for doing that was to quit telling people how excellent I used to be at everything. Identifying myself through who I used to be. How many times had I said, "My memory is so bad now, but I used to have an amazing memory, I rarely forgot anything!" I had to start focusing on how well I was

doing despite my brain injury. I had to think "despite my brain injury;" "not before my brain injury."

My best path started when I decided I was going to learn how to do things that I never would have tried before my brain injury. Before my brain injury, enough things came easily to me that I could just avoid anything that was challenging. But it wouldn't do for living with a brain injury. Suddenly everything was very hard. Nothing was easy. Taking the easy path, and doing nothing, didn't seem like a choice I wanted to make.

Fortunately, one bonus to having a brain injury was that my life was filled with opportunities to impress myself and others. I no longer needed to be a captain of industry making a six-figure income. I just had to have a job; people would be impressed! I didn't need to claim that I did more before breakfast than most people did all day, if I just tied my own shoes I would be patting myself on the back every morning.

I call that "re-calibrating my self-worth." At first that meant taking pride in things that my previous self would have laughed at (I was such a jerk!). Once I had mastered the small things, the basics, I could move on to bigger and better things. Now, after only 30 years, I have done things that would have made my previous self envious.

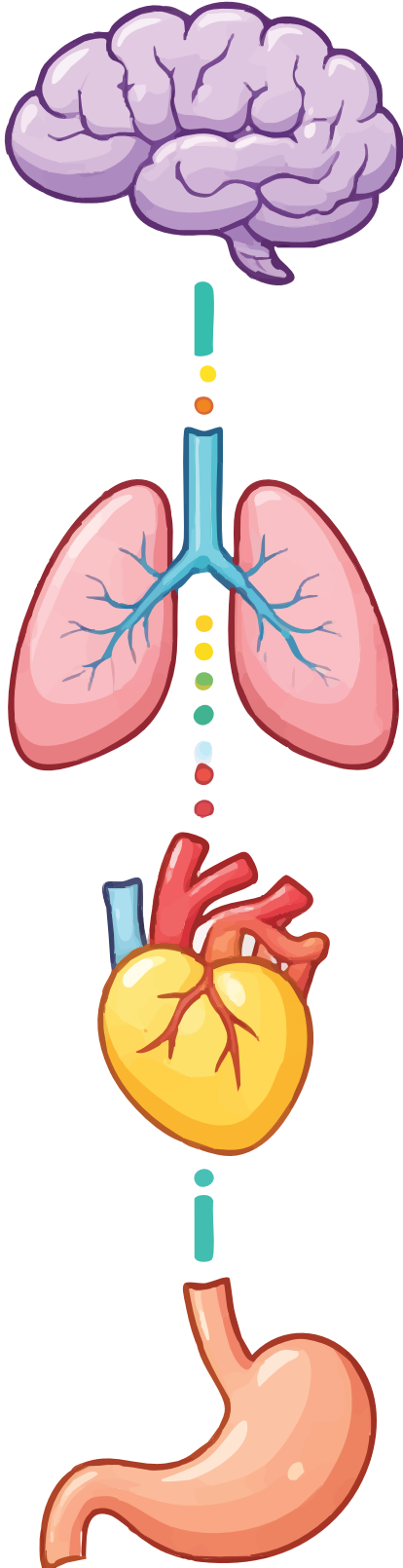
I used to have a big ego, and I spent a lot of time trying to create this image of me being superhuman. I was always insecure that someone would see through my disguise. Now I am happy being me, being who I truly am. I am comfortable being me.

All I do is do my best. That is certainly all that anyone can expect, including myself.

THAT GUT FEELING:

What Science Is Finally Revealing About Digestion and Brain Injury Recovery

By Phil Gonzales, Writer and Content Developer



You leave the hospital after a brain injury with a stack of discharge papers, a bag of pain meds, and a brain that is doing somersaults behind your eyes. For nearly twenty years as a writer at the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance, I've listened to survivors tell me stories they sometimes thought no one would believe. Yes, the anticipated stories about memory issues, mobility challenges, or personality changes. I've also written quite a bit about shifting family dynamics, caregiver fatigue, and sports concussion prevention. But, there are quieter stories whose symptoms frequently appear in the background of a person's journey: "I can't digest anything anymore." "My stomach hasn't worked right since the injury." "I throw up after every meal."

And I'll be honest, I believed them; but beyond a general "I guess the brain really does affect everything" I didn't have a lot of useful research to point to to explain why. Clinicians didn't talk about digestion as part of brain injury. Providers rarely connected nausea, gastroparesis, chronic constipation, or food intolerance to what happened inside the skull. How does an organ that sends electrical impulses affect the chemical processes in your gut? And, why does your gut health seem to affect your brain?

But in the past few years, and especially with two major studies published in 2025, everything has started to change.

A GROWING BODY OF EVIDENCE

The 2025 Turning Point

Two papers released in 2025 helped fill crucial gaps in our understanding of the brain-gut connection:

1. Albert et al. (2025), "Role of the Gut-Brain Axis in Severe Traumatic Brain Injury" showed that severe TBI dramatically disrupts gut microbiota diversity within hours of injury, reducing beneficial species and increasing inflammation-driving ones.
2. Xu et al. (2025), "Traumatic Brain Injury and Gut Microbiome: The Role of the Gut-Brain Axis in Neurodegenerative Processes" Demonstrated that TBI triggers gut barrier breakdown, microbial translocation, and long-term shifts linked to anxiety, cognitive decline, and neuroinflammation.

Together, these studies reinforce what survivors have been saying for years: the gut feels the injury too.

HOW A BRAIN INJURY REACHES THE GUT

1. The Brain–Gut Nervous System Connection

TBI disrupts the vagus nerve, the electrical “superhighway” between the brain and the gut. Albert et al. found that altered vagal signaling contributes to slowed gastric motility, nausea, and erratic digestion. In fact, after TBI, vagal signaling drops by 30 to 40 percent, leading to reduced peristalsis (the movements that push food through your digestive system) and delayed gastric emptying (the amount of time it takes food to leave your stomach).

2. The Inflammation Cascade

Because the brain has experienced a trauma, inflammatory cytokines are released that, because of the injury, spread through the entire bloodstream. Xu et al. show that these cytokines weaken the gut barrier within 24 hours, increasing intestinal permeability (“leaky gut”). “Leaky gut” is exactly what it sounds like. Your gut starts to leak things into the bloodstream. In their research, they discovered that gut “leakiness” increased by 42 percent right after a TBI.

But what, you may ask, is the gut leaking, exactly?

3. Microbiome Collapse

Your microbiome is the carefully balanced community of microorganisms living in your body that keep everything running as it should. Multiple studies confirm that TBI causes significant microbiome disruption (“dysbiosis”). Xu et al. report an up to 50 percent reduction in short-chain fatty acid–producing bacteria which are key for anti-inflammatory brain protection. At the same time, pathogenic species, which heighten immune activation, go way up.

These aren’t minor shifts, they are measurable, physiological changes. And those pathogenic bacteria, the ones that cause all the inflammation, they’re leaking right through the gut.

4. The Metabolic Shift

Meanwhile, the gut usually helps your brain by making and managing important chemical messengers like serotonin (which affects mood) and GABA (which helps the brain stay calm and steady).

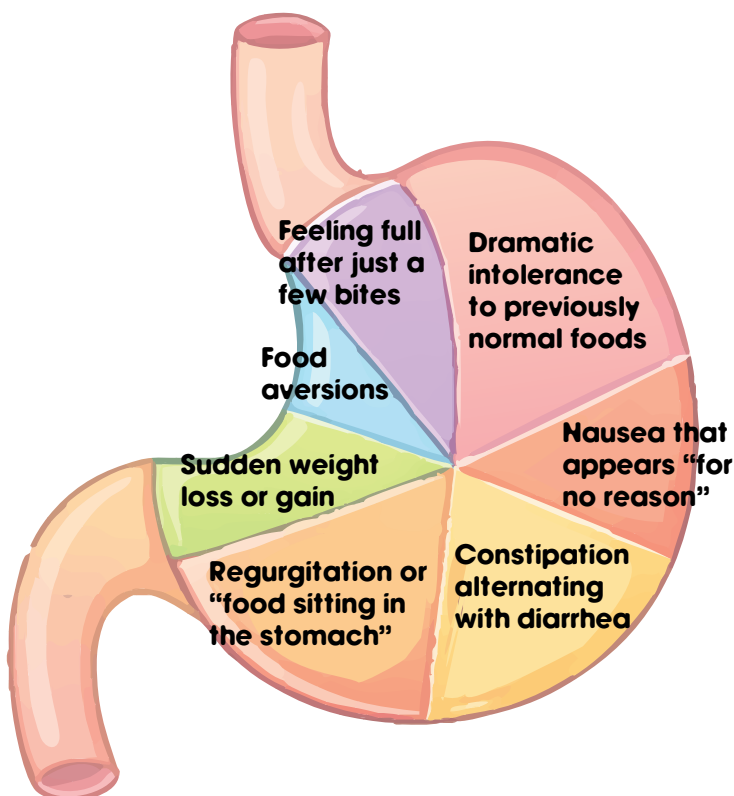
But after a brain injury:

- Serotonin drops by about 25 to 30 percent, which can affect mood, sleep, and appetite.
- GABA becomes unpredictable, which can make anxiety, irritability, or restlessness worse.
- Helpful gut nutrients (called SCFAs) fall sharply, which means the brain loses some of its natural protection against inflammation and stress (see above in Inflammation Cascade).

WHY SURVIVORS FEEL WHAT THEY FEEL

In Xu et al.’s review, 60 to 70 percent of TBI patients exhibit some form of gastrointestinal dysfunction. This emerging science helps validate this lived experience. Survivors report:

When the vagus nerve misfires, the microbiome destabilizes, the gut barrier weakens, and these symptoms stop being mysterious.



THE FEEDBACK LOOP: HOW GUT TROUBLE MAKES BRAIN TROUBLE WORSE

There's one more step in this process, though. It's the mystery that was finally, solidly solved with overwhelming evidence last year. Though survivors' gut troubles seemed to start with their TBIs, after a time it seemed like the gut troubles were causing additional TBI symptoms. Doctors even referred to it as the Brain/Gut Loop. They knew it was occurring, but not why it was occurring.

All the changes happening in the gut after a brain injury don't simply stay in the digestive system. This is where the new problem begins: the gut sends signals back to the brain, and when the gut is in distress, those signals make recovery harder.

Here's how the loop forms:

1. The brain injury disrupts the vagus nerve, slowing or confusing digestive function. Food

isn't moving well. The stomach and intestines tense or stall. Nausea, bloating, and constipation show up quickly.

2. The gut lining becomes irritated and leaky. When the barrier weakens, tiny particles and bacterial byproducts slip into the bloodstream. This activates the immune system.

3. The immune reaction creates body-wide inflammation. Cytokines rise. Inflammation increases everywhere, not just in the gut.

4. That inflammation travels back to the brain. Now the brain, already injured, gets hit with a second wave of stress from the body.

5. Inflammation inside the brain makes symptoms worse. Cognitive fog, headaches, memory issues, fatigue, emotional swings, they all become more intense.

Brain Injury & Gut Health

A two-way loop



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WHO HAS BEEN AFFECTED BY STROKE**



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Long Lake Regional Park – New Brighton

Miller Hill Mall – Duluth

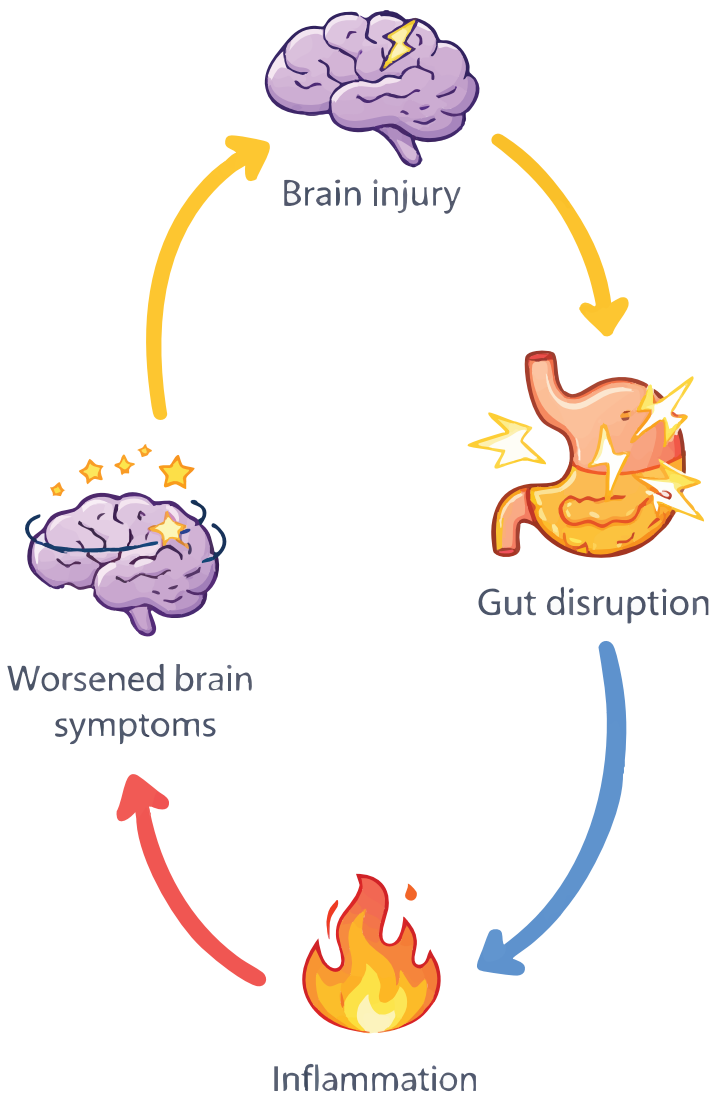
CentraCare Health Plaza – Saint Cloud



**For more information on participating in person
or virtually please visit www.strokemn.org**

- 6. **This new brain stress further disrupts vagus-nerve signaling.** The brain sends even fewer or messier signals to the gut.
- 7. **The gut becomes even more dysregulated.** Digestive issues worsen... which produces more inflammation... which feeds back into the brain again.

This is the loop survivors feel but often don't have language for:



It isn't psychological.

It isn't imagined.

It's measurable.

A biological cycle that explains why some symptoms feel like they "spiral" even long after the initial injury.

Both 2025 studies emphasize that this loop can persist for months or years, and that changes in the gut microbiome can influence mood, memory, sleep, and long-term inflammation. When people say "everything got worse once my stomach went downhill," they are describing this cycle in real time.

And this can have long-term effects. Xu et al. note that chronic gut dysbiosis can contribute to changes in the brain that look similar to early Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. This happens because when those harmful byproducts enter the bloodstream and affect the brain, keeping inflammation high and stressing brain cells, it may permanently change the structure of the brain, leading to neurodegeneration and problems with memory, thinking, and mood.

This is why nutrition, microbiome health, and gut support are starting to matter as part of the core brain injury recovery picture.

NUTRITION AS TREATMENT

Early Feeding Matters

Clinical nutrition studies show that early enteral feeding (within 48 hours), whether orally or through a feeding tube, reduces infection, supports immune health, and improves outcomes. The brain accounts for about 20 percent of the body's energy consumption. That percentage skyrockets after a brain injury. Nutrients need to increase in the first 48 hours. Add to that the leaky gut that begins due to lowered use of the gut's systems, and you understand why early feeding is vital.

High-Protein Diets Support Neural Repair

Increased protein intake helps counter the brain's increased energy needs after TBI, supporting:

- Mitochondrial repair (brain injuries can actually damage the inside of brain cells)

Eating After a Brain Injury

1. Focus on Anti-Inflammatory Whole Foods

Leafy greens, colorful vegetables, berries, nuts, beans, and whole grains help calm inflammation and support gut health.

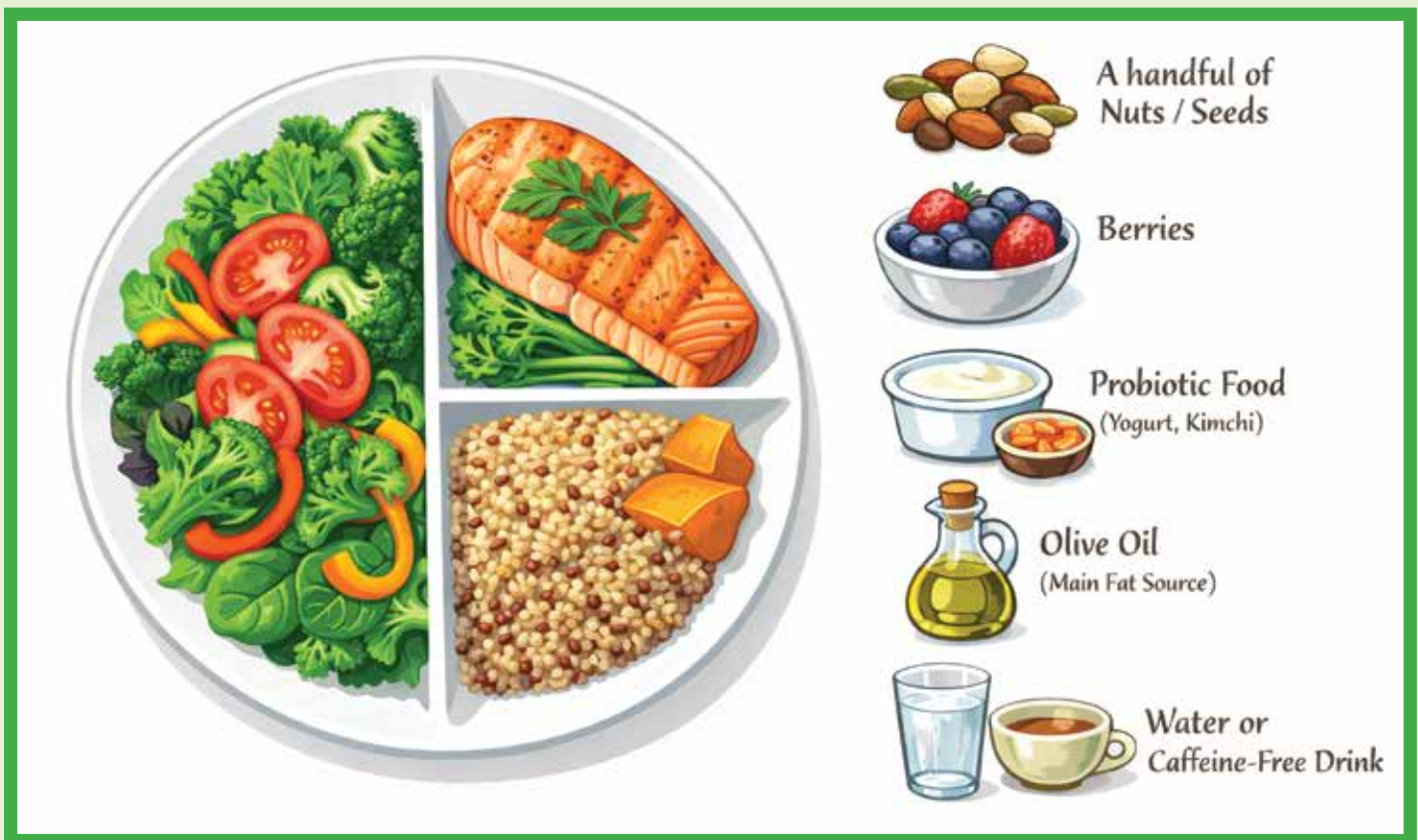
2. Get Omega-3 Fats Omega-3s support mood, memory, and cell repair. Aim for salmon, trout, sardines, walnuts, flax, or chia.

3. Support Vitamin D Levels Vitamin D helps regulate inflammation and nerve function. Include fortified

dairy, eggs, mushrooms, or safe sun exposure; ask your provider about testing.

4. Include Creatine-Rich Foods Creatine supports brain energy after injury. Include beef, pork, fish, and dairy. Vegans and vegetarian diets may require supplements.

5. Use MIND/Mediterranean Eating Patterns Base meals around greens, berries, nuts, olive oil, beans, whole grains, fish, and limited fried/processed foods.



6. Go Easy on Caffeine Caffeine can worsen headaches, anxiety, and sleep issues. Keep intake low during recovery.

7. Avoid Alcohol Even small amounts can slow recovery and worsen symptoms.

8. Add Probiotic Foods Yogurt, kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut, miso, and kombucha help restore gut balance, which supports mood and inflammation control.

9. Stay Hydrated Thirst cues may be unreliable after TBI. Drink water regularly throughout the day.

10. Keep Meals Regular and Balanced Consistent meals help steady blood sugar and mood. Aim for protein + fiber + healthy fats at each meal.

- Neuroplasticity
- Immune response modulation

Probiotics and Prebiotics Show Promise

Several animal studies, and a handful of human pilots, suggest that targeted probiotics:

- Restore beneficial gut flora
- Boost anti-inflammatory metabolites
- Reduce post-TBI anxiety behaviors

Xu et al. also notes that Short-Chain Fatty Acid supplementation restored cognitive performance in mouse models.

Dietary Patterns Matter

Diets rich in fiber, omega-3 fatty acids, and fermented foods have been associated with reduced inflammation and improved cognitive stability.

This doesn't mean diet is a cure, but it is emerging as a real tool for recovery. See page 11 for more information.

The review also notes that in early research, fecal transplants from a healthy donor to an injured animal helped restore a healthier gut balance and reduced some of these harmful brain changes. The benefits are still being studied, but show real promise.

SO, WHERE ARE WE NOW?

I think about all the survivors who've spoken to me over the years about their digestive issues, as if it were something separate from their brain injury, or something they just needed to "push through." And, if it seemed to cycle back to their brain, that was a coincidence, or stress, or entirely unrelated.

Now, finally, we can point to research that says: You were right. Your body was telling the truth.

We're still early in understanding how nutrition, gut health, and brain injury intertwine. But the science is catching up to the stories you've been telling us all along. And that matters, not just for treatment, but for dignity. For being heard. For knowing that what you feel in your gut isn't imagined. It's part of your injury, and part of your recovery.

And we're finally starting to understand why. **MM**

MNBIA RESOURCE FACILITATION IS FREE!

If you know someone who does not know where to start, just have them call- We Can Help!

612-378-2742
- or -
800-669-6442

Grey Matters

The Recovery Advice I Wish Someone Had Given Me After My TBI

For a long time after my brain injury, I kept trying to fix my brain... with my brain.

I was doing the therapies. I was pacing my activities. I was resting (sometimes whether I wanted to or not). I was taking supplements and trying every reasonable strategy I could find. And still, something just wasn't clicking.

I lived in this constant state of almost okay.

The brain fog was the worst part. Not forgetfulness – I could handle that. This was the feeling that my thoughts were moving through cotton balls. I'd lose words mid-sentence. I couldn't track conversations. Emails took forever to write because I had to reread the same paragraph five times. Some days my brain just... stalled.

And then came the digestion issues.

Bloating, stomach pain, unpredictable digestion, and that lovely combo of exhaustion after eating. I didn't connect it to my brain injury at first. Honestly, I thought I had just developed a completely separate problem. Lucky me, right?

Here's what I understand now: after a brain injury, your nervous system gets dysregulated. Your body stays in a low-level fight-or-flight state, and digestion is a rest-and-repair activity. So your body quietly stops prioritizing it. Food doesn't process the same, inflammation ramps up, and your brain ends up dealing with the consequences.

I just didn't realize the consequences could look exactly like my concussion symptoms.

People started suggesting I try going gluten-free, including my doctor. I ignored them.

I resisted hard. Bread was comfort. Toast was easy. Crackers were one of the few foods I could tolerate when my head hurt. After losing so much normal life to a brain injury, I was not emotionally ready to break up with pasta too.

But I also hit a point where I was tired of living in survival mode. Not awful, not bedridden... just never fully well. So I finally said fine – I'll try it for two weeks and then go back to normal eating when it inevitably does nothing.

Except it didn't do nothing.

Within about two weeks my brain fog lifted noticeably. Not magically cured, but clearer. My head felt quieter. My energy was steadier instead of crashing mid-day. My IBS symptoms improved dramatically. And the part that truly shocked me – my inflammation dropped so quickly I lost an entire ring size. My rings were literally falling off my fingers.

That got my attention.

What I eventually learned is that a brain injury is also an inflammatory injury. If your gut is irritated, your immune system stays activated. When your immune system stays activated, your brain struggles to heal. I had been working so hard on cognitive recovery while unknowingly aggravating inflammation with each meal.

And here's the funny part: being gluten-free turned out to be way easier than I expected.

I had built it up in my head as complicated and restrictive. It really just became a set of swaps. After a little time, I stopped craving bread. I genuinely don't miss it anymore – which is a sentence past-me would never have believed.

If you're a pasta person, chickpea pasta is actually fantastic and it has protein, so you don't get that carb crash afterward. That alone made a big difference in my afternoon energy.

I'm not saying gluten is the issue for every TBI survivor. But I am saying that the brain and the gut are not separate systems. I spent a long time trying to heal my brain only from the neck up.

The piece I was missing was inflammation.

And for me, the turning point in recovery didn't come from a new therapy.

It came from what I put on my plate.

Turns out the breakthrough in my recovery didn't come from my head. It came from my gut, and from finally putting the right fuel in my body.

—Amy Zellmer

The Political Environment Facing Us in 2026

This year is an incredibly important political time in Minnesota. Many eyes are on the upcoming 2026 Mid-Term Elections taking place in November. Nationally, all 435 of the Congressional House of Representative seats as well as one-third of the Congressional Senate seats will be up for re-election. In Minnesota, the house, senate, and executive offices (including Governor) are all up for re-election. These elections and the decisions made by the winners will have a tremendous impact on our state's economic and social programs for years to come. With many long-serving legislators already announcing their retirements, there will be a host of new faces and significant changes to Minnesota's political landscape beginning in 2027. Before that, however, Minnesota will first need to conclude our current 2026 State Legislative Session.

2026 Legislative Session

Minnesota has faced a lot of critical issues over the past year that will deeply shape what may or may not happen this session. While there are always many topics of importance to address, it is likely that state legislators will focus in on a few key topics in 2026, including:

- Public Safety
- Gun Violence
- Healthcare
- Immigration
- Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

Lawmakers went back to work at the State Capitol on Tuesday, February 17, with nearly tied memberships between Republicans and Democrats. Both parties will likely need to work together and reach agreements across party lines in order to pass legislation. The two-year state budget was passed last year in 2025, which means that 2026 will be generally focused on policy changes and updates. With an expected deficit looming for the next budget cycle beginning in 2027, it is expected to be very difficult for any issues with any type of spending or fiscal note to be passed this year and potentially even into the coming years, as well.

The Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance has been laser-focused on protecting Medicaid (MA) as its top priority and will continue to work with the Health & Human Services Committees at the Capitol to ensure the needs of individuals with brain injury and other disabilities are prioritized as pressure mounts and the spotlight has been placed upon Minnesota's Department of *Mind Matters*

Human Services. The expected upcoming state budget deficit, impending Federal cuts to Medicaid, recent fraud fighting efforts, and concerns about public safety in the community all dominate concerns we have regarding protecting people who are most vulnerable in our society. Many of these conversations have already begun, and we look forward to continuing them throughout the rest of this year.

Coming Up Next

Our Citizen Advocates continue to meet with their legislators and show up to the Minnesota State Capitol on a regular basis. We plan to host a variety of events and conversations to increase education and awareness during March, in national recognition of brain injury awareness month. Join us for one of our upcoming spring events:

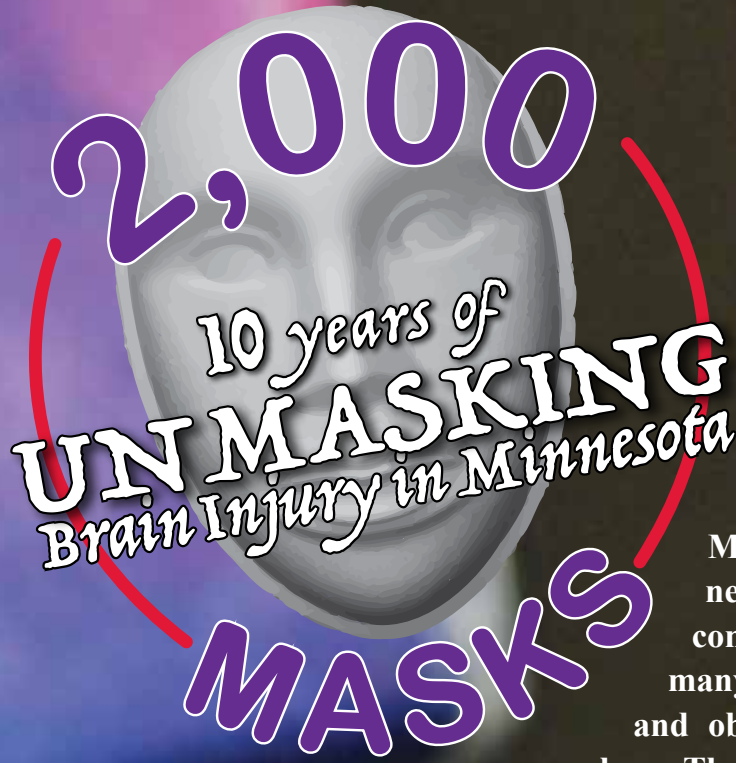
- March 11 – March 25: Unmasking Brain Injury Exhibit at the Minnesota State Capitol
- March 14: Brain Injury Support Conference
- March 28: Unmasking Brain Injury Event (See Next Page→)
- April 23: Brain Injury Professionals Conference
- April 29: Disability Advocacy Day on the Hill

After the 2026 Legislative Session ends in May, we will then host a Legislative Wrap-Up event and begin our next Citizen Advocates Academy (CAA) over the summer 2026 months.

Individuals can stay updated on our Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance Public Policy, learn more about Medicaid protection efforts, and see other initiatives by visiting braininjurymn.org/advocacy/ and signing up for emails, volunteer opportunities, or upcoming events.

Minnesota Legislative Session





Save The Date!

Minnesota's greatest power is its people: neighbors who look out for one another; communities that stand together; and stories, so many stories of resilience in the face of hardship and obstacles that no single person should face alone. The world has noticed that power which for a decade has fueled Unmasking Brain Injury in Minnesota.

Since 2016, Unmasking has invited more than 2,000 Minnesotans to share their stories through art. Behind each mask is a person that's been touched by brain injury as a survivor, parent, sibling, friend, neighbor, co-worker, or professional. Each story has given us a glimpse at the courage, vulnerability, and humanity behind every experience of brain injury. This ten-year milestone reminds us that storytelling is community-building and that when Minnesotans come together to listen, create, and bear witness, we become stronger as a state and as a people.

*Ten years. 2000 masks.
One Minnesota.*

March 28, 2026

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 Wells Fargo Community Support Campaign

Tributes

In Honor of Ingrid Haugen
 Karen Haugen

In Honor of Jon Lavalier
 Ms. Kathryn Lavalier

In Honor of Barabara Roubal
 Toni & Greg Jones

In Honor of Sue Sjoseilius's retirement
 Ms. Lynn Noren

In Honor of Tom Theis
 Ms. Bonnie L. Theis & Mr. Joe Martin

Lifetime Members

Ms. Mary Adams
 Mr. Richard Bloom
 Mr. Douglas A. Bruce Jr.
 Mr. Wynn Bruce
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard Duerre
 Mr. & Ms. John & Marcine Forrette
 Ms. Rosemary Froehle
 Mr. Paul Godlewski
 Ms. Ellie Hands
 Ms. Elizabeth A. Jensen
 Dr. Robert L. Karol, Ph.D.
 Mr. David Kendrick
 Mr. David P. King
 Ms. Patricia Landers
 Mr. Martin J. McMorrow
 Dr. William T. O'Dowd, PhD
 Mr. Jason Peters
 Mr. & Ms. Terry & Ardis Sandstrom
 Ms. Catherine I. Shannon
 Mr. & Ms. William & LeAnn Siitari
 Mr. & Ms. Brian Siska
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael Strand
 Mrs. Terri Traudt
 Mr. Tim Traudt



NEW LOCATION!!!

MINNEAPOLIS MARRIOTT NW HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER-BROOKLYN PARK

APRIL 23, 2026

Each year, this event brings together some of the most passionate and dedicated minds in the field of brain injury care—and this year is no exception. Join us for a day of learning, collaboration, and inspiration.



Keynote Address

Current and Emerging Standards for Concussion Identification and Management

Steven Broglio, PhD, ATC,
Director, University of
Michigan Concussion Center

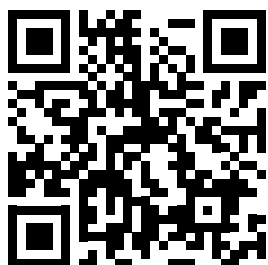


Breakout Sessions

- A. From Science to Sidelines: Insights from the Concussion Assessment, Research, and Education (CARE) Consortium
- B. Brain Injury and Corrections
- C. More Than a Test Score: Supporting Real-World Work Participation After TBI
- D. Evidence-Based Fall Prevention for Older Adults in Minnesota
- E. Physician Office Visits: How to Prepare Your Clients with Brain Injury

-
- A. Traumatic Brain Injury Can Be Different in Older Adults
 - B. Interventions and Support for Individuals with Brain Injury Across the Continuum of Recovery
 - C. Still Reading, Reading Differently: Understanding Changes in Reading Habits After TBI
 - D. TBI: A Tale of Missed and Misdiagnosis
 - E. Acupuncture Treatment for Chronic Post-Traumatic Headache in Individuals with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury: A Pilot Study

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- A. Further Dive into Autonomic Dysfunction in the Setting of TBI: Rehab Focused
 - B. Sports and a TBI: A Double Edged Sword
 - C. Neuro-Optometry: CONCUSS Study – Vision Therapy Protocol
 - D. Regulate, Then Rebuild: Aquatic and Fitness Strategies for Dysautonomia, Sensory Overload, and Mood After TBI
 - E. The Caregiver You Don't See is Still in the Room



Register Today

For more information or to register, please visit www.braininjurymn.org/conference



If you believe in a Minnesota where everyone recognizes brain injury and its effects; where all individuals living with brain injury are encouraged to realize their full potential; and where the greater community recognizes the intrinsic value of all people living with a TBI, we hope you will give to the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance today.

Over the past three years, the MNBIA has expanded its reach by offering online options for many of its services. Our teams worked hard to make sure that Minnesotans had access to opportunities and supports whether they were in our offices or at home.

We would like to make sure these opportunities remain available across Minnesota and, to help ensure that, we need you more than we ever have before.

Please donate to the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance today. A gift of \$50, \$100, \$250, or whatever is meaningful to you, can help us continue to offer educational opportunities, advocacy training, and volunteer training. YOU make a difference when you include us in your gift giving.

WWW.
[braininjurymn.org/
donate](http://braininjurymn.org/donate)



2026

BRAIN INJURY

SUPPORT CONFERENCE

Saturday, March 14, 2026

12:00 PM – 4:00 PM

LOCATION:

North Heights Church

2701 Rice St., Roseville, MN 55113

Each Brain Injury Support Conference is a great chance to meet other individuals and families navigating life after a brain injury. It's also a place to hear updates on policies that affect you, experience personal brain injury stories and learn about brain injury care and support.



Use the QR code or at www.braininjurymn.org

As always, the cost is FREE but a donation is always appreciated. If you have any additional questions-contact Alec W, email alecw@braininjurymn.org, phone 612-378-2742 or 800-669-6442.

The next BISC CONFERENCE will be in OCTOBER!
Put it on your calendar today!



Conference Schedule

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM
Registration and Time with Vendors

1:00 PM – 1:30 PM

**How Can the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance/
Minnesota Stroke Association Support You?**

Presented by Alec Wendelboe, Education and Community Outreach Coordinator, Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance/Minnesota Stroke Association

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

**"I Don't think I Did This Right" – A Journey of Poetry
and Brain Injuries – Part 1**

Presented by Kathryn Paulson, Brain Injury Association of Wisconsin, University of Eau Claire and Jerry K. Hoepner, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, ASHA Fellow, Professor and Assistant Chair, University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, Department of Speech, Language, & Hearing Sciences, Co-founding Editor of Teaching & Learning in Communication Sciences & Disorders, Associate Coordinator of ASHA SIG 20 – Counseling, PI for the ACL TBI State Partnership Program Grant

In a two-part presentation, Jerry and Kathryn will explain how the University of Eau Claire's Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences Department started a poetry group for people with aphasia and brain injury survivors, alongside poets Brendan Constantine and Carmen Fought. Hear the story behind a three-part class turning into almost six years of reading and writing poetry and the creation of the Thursday Night Poets (TNP). With participants from across the nation, TNP has held multiple poetry readings, and published three poetry chapbooks together. Learn how poetry, while unconventional to some, can be an effective therapy for brain injury survivors as well as their loved ones.

2:30 PM – 2:45 PM
Break & Time with Vendors

2:45 PM – 3:45 PM

**"I Don't think I Did This Right" – A Journey of Poetry
and Brain Injuries – Part 2**

3:45 PM – 4:00 PM
Closing Remarks, Teardown, & Departure

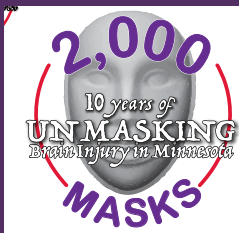
UPCOMING EVENTS 2026



BRAIN INJURY SUPPORT CONFERENCE

March 14

North Heights Church, Roseville



TEN YEARS. 2000 MASKS. ONE MINNESOTA

March 28

Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park



BRAIN INJURY ANNUAL CONFERENCE

April 23

Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park



STRIDES FOR STROKES

May 16

Duluth, Saint Cloud, and Twin Cities



WALK FOR THOUGHT

September 19

Duluth and Twin Cities

Visit these websites for more information on the above events.



braininjurymn.org/events/



strokemn.org/events/